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Culture of peace

Letter dated 26 November 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I avail myself of this opportunity to transmit to you the Declaration for Promoting Dialogue and Mutual Understanding among Religions and Civilizations, "Ohrid 2007" (see annex), adopted at the World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilizations, "The Contribution of Religion and Culture to Peace, Mutual Respect and Cooperation", held in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia, from 26 to 28 October 2007.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 49, "Culture of peace".

(*Signed*) Goran **Stevcevski**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 26 November 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration for Promoting Dialogue and Mutual Understanding among Religions and Civilizations

World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilizations: "The Contribution of Religion and Culture to Peace, Mutual Respect and Cooperation"

26-28 October 2007, Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia

Preamble

- Deeply aware of the strong role of faith in life, values and moral codes and the overall socialization of each person as a part of the wider community he or she lives in naturally;
- Convinced of the contribution of faith and culture to peace, mutual understanding and cooperation;
- Recognizing the importance of the ideas of mutual tolerance, understanding and building bridges for cooperation among nations, communities and countries;
- Working on a culture of dialogue, tolerance and peace for the purpose of improving prosperity, welfare and mutual cooperation among nations and countries of the world;

We, the participants in the World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilizations, the spiritual leaders and representatives of the religious communities and denominations, as well as of the 50 countries we belong to, unanimously and with a feeling of profound personal and wider civilization responsibility adopt the present declaration:

Declaration for Promoting Dialogue and Mutual Understanding among Religions and Civilizations
"Ohrid 2007"

1. The common good, justice, solidarity and human rights, implemented through kind words and deeds, are the guiding light of our efforts in affirming unity in the world and in ensuring its progress and survival, according to the religious and moral principles we apply to ourselves and others. The practice of faith should have the purpose of realizing profound spiritual and moral values.

2. We emphasize the importance of knowing and practicing our respective religions, which talk of faith, hope and love among all and for all. At the same time, we state that only through the creation of wide cooperation between civilizations, based on the principles of mutual respect and esteem, shall we contribute to the creation of the preconditions for understanding other religions.

3. Human history is rich in major achievements and setbacks, rises and falls. Religion is a driving force, one that gives meaning, moral principles and positive guidance.

4. We strongly condemn all forms of religious violence and any justification for it. We condemn the abuse of religion and all types of discrimination and actions that humiliate human dignity. We ask believers of all religions to act according to the principle of reciprocity: let us treat others now as we would like them to treat us.

5. We are fully dedicated to the strengthening and development of the dialogue among different faiths, cultures and civilizations. Love is in the foundation of every religion. We condemn any interpretation of religion that preaches terror since no reason can justify terror and murder. Aware that prejudice, mistrust and fear give birth to terrorism, we, the participants in this conference, are committed to promoting mutual respect of cultures and confessions.

6. We declare that respect for the rights of different ethnic and religious communities is essential to the promotion of mutual dialogue among different confessions, civilizations and cultures. Aware that religious and cultural diversity should be a bridge for cooperation and understanding, we state that by resolving the problems of smaller religious and cultural communities in countries, while respecting traditional values of the majority communities, many sources of instability within and between States may be prevented.

7. Education, as a significant pillar in the forming of strong ethical personalities, represents the main basis for promoting tolerance, dialogue and understanding among religions and civilizations, respect for the differences, of human rights and traditional moral values. Adequate education is the main instrument for removing stereotypes, as well as the misperceptions of different cultures, religions and civilizations.

8. We are entirely dedicated to raising awareness of the need and the importance of mutual respect among religious leaders and believers. This should also be understood as an obligation of States, which, through the education of new generations, cultivate the spirit of the higher values of civilization. Learning to live together means recognition of our differences as an asset, not as a disadvantage. We commit ourselves to the creation of an educational system for a new generation of young people, a generation that shall promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and not hate and prejudice.

9. We fully accept the diversity of religious beliefs, cultural traditions and civilizations' experience as an unavoidable part of shared human values. There are no superior or inferior civilizations, races, cultures and languages.

10. The modern global environment entails many new challenges and temptations for individuals, communities and States. Dialogue and mutual understanding and respect point to the need for mobilizing political leaders, spiritual leaders, intellectuals and all other social actors. Therefore, the commitment to dialogue among different civilizations and religions is simultaneously a commitment to fight against terrorism and instability.

11. We stress the great importance of the empowerment of women.

12. This world conference is a significant meeting which presents an opportunity for us to see the reality, to determine the obstacles and to find solutions to the

problems we face. It is an impetus for further meetings and contacts at all levels, as well as a strong message to citizens from all countries that religious peace and tolerance are a reality and that we must all continue to work for their survival.

13. We, the participants in this conference, send a message to the institutions of the United Nations to maintain the momentum and to strengthen their commitment to the promotion of dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations.

14. We support the idea of establishing a Steering Council of Religions under the auspices of the United Nations that could promote dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations.

15. The Declaration for Promoting the Dialogue and Mutual Understanding among Religions and Civilizations shall be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, the High Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the African Union, the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of American States, the World Council of Churches, the International Organization of Francophonie and other regional and international organizations, as well as to the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations.

29 October 2007, Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia